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Accession No. *63024* Class No. ....

Songs of a Fool and  
Other Verses . . .



• • Geraldine Meyrick • •

• • Semi-Monthly Letter

SAN JOSE, CALIF.

Gift of  
Prof. J. M. Stillman  
V. C. '74

### DEDICATION.

---

Unto all those whose love hath helped to make  
Music within my soul, I dedicate  
These few stray notes. First unto those who e love  
Hath compassed me about from year to year,  
Making me strong where else I had been weak,  
Making me sing when else I should have wept;  
Yet hardly less to those who, passing by,  
Have given me a blessing as they passed,  
And wished me well; for whether love be long,  
Or linger but a moment, either way  
It waketh music in the soul beloved.  
So, and not otherwise, these songs were made;  
Faint echoes of diviner harmony.  
O ye, whose love first called them into life,  
Accept these songs as token of my love,  
For love's sake overlooking all their faults.





# Songs of a Fool.

---

BY GERALDINE MEYRICK.

---

*His pleading voice arose: "O Lord,  
Be merciful to me, a fool!"*

*Edward Rowland Sill.*

---

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA:

1895.



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I.

**PRELUDE.**

---

Weird of gesture, and strange of speech,  
A Fool am I, in motley dressed;  
I have no mind for the wise to teach,  
No soul, to be banned or blessed;  
For the Truth men praise, and the Love men preach  
I hold them both a jest.

Merry am I, as one should be  
Who serveth a gracious king;  
Good meat, good wine, they are never free,  
So mirth is the price I bring;  
And the wide world's woe it is naught to me,  
As loud I laugh and sing.

## II.

### WASSAIL.

---

Come, drink a health to Folly,  
And all her merry train;  
Farewell to Melancholy,  
And wit-benumbing Pain;  
A Fool's life should be jolly,  
Or else he lives in vain.

Let laughter follow laughter,  
No sign of sorrow fall;  
Shake every beam and rafter,  
Make tremble every wall;  
For who knows what comes after?  
Who knows when Death may call?

We all are Fools together,  
Not one of us is wise;  
We prophecy the weather,  
We lecture on the skies;  
To-night we know not whether  
The morrow's sun shall rise.

So drink a health to Folly,  
And all her merry train;  
Farewell to Melancholy,  
And wit-benumbing Pain;  
A Fool's life should be jolly,  
Or else he lives in vain.

III.  
**REVERIE.**

---

They call me a Fool, and little I know;  
Neither whence I came, nor whither I go;  
Neither what I am, nor may hope to be,  
When time is lost in eternity.

\* \* \* \* \*

And yet—so long as I dwell upon earth,  
There shall not be lacking the sounds of mirth;  
For wherever I go comes a gaping crowd,  
And whatever I do there is laughter loud;  
Laughter that half conceals a sneer,  
Though sometimes I fancy it covers a tear.  
But little care I, for pity or scorn;  
This, only, troubles me: Why was I born,  
To be called a Fool, and little to know,  
Neither whence I came, nor whither I go,  
Neither what I am, nor may hope to be,  
When time is lost in eternity.

IV.

**MY LADY.**

---

Fain would I paint my Lady as she is;  
But that no artist's hand could rightly do,  
Far less a Fool's; so here's the best I can.

Glad is my Lady, with the joy that springs  
From holy thoughts and hopes; and merry, too,  
Knowing that in the end things will go well.  
But yet I know that she hath realized,  
Hath suffered, as all noble souls must do,  
The very utter agonies of life;  
Which suffering never wholly leaves her heart,  
Making her graver than she else might be.  
My Lady is so far above the world,  
Its petty meanness cannot touch her soul.  
She dreams not of the biting taunts and sneers  
That make up more than half a poor Fool's life.  
The selfish grasping of the newly rich,  
The sordid saving of the hopeless poor,  
All the debasing troubles of base hearts,  
Are hid from her by her own nobleness.

Words are so weak! Her face, so calmly sweet;  
Her gold-brown hair, the sunbeams love so well;  
Her eyes, of heaven's blue, that see so far;  
All these surpass description. I will keep  
Her image in my heart, and honor it  
In reverential silence, evermore.

V.

REVELATION.

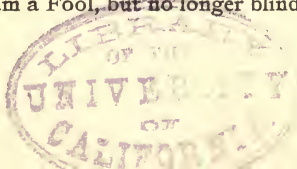
---

Would you know the way that my Lady came?  
In the midst of a careless crowd I stood,  
Re-making old jests that they counted good:  
'Twas the way that I earned my livelihood.  
When all of a sudden a sense of shame  
Startled my soul, set my face a-flame,  
And just at that moment my Lady came.

We were on the lawn; 'twas a summer day;  
In soft, cool white was my Lady dressed;  
My cheeks burned like fire; I felt oppressed;  
And my audience, seeing me so distressed,  
Laughed louder yet, till I heard one say:  
"Silence! My Lady will walk this way."  
How the sun does burn on a summer day!

Well, my Lady took pity on me, a Fool,  
And she led me away to a quiet glade,  
Where slow-growing oaks made a welcome shade,  
Then her hand on my shoulder so gently laid,  
And showed me a stream with a rocky pool;  
And lo! in its depths, serene and cool,  
I looked on myself as I was, a Fool!

I looked, and I shuddered. I had been blind;  
Had given no guess, when men laughed at me,  
My looks, not my wit, had aroused their glee.  
Why! my cap and bells were a sight to see.  
Now, thanks to my Lady, so wise, so kind,  
A part of my folly is left behind—  
I still am a Fool, but no longer blind.



VI.  
**SONGS.**

---

When e'er my Lady smiles on me,  
It seems as if the world grew bright  
With sudden glory; earth and sea  
Swim in a golden flood of light;  
And nothing common seems, nor vile,  
Illumined by my Lady's smile.

When e'er my Lady deigus to speak,  
The world, methinks, must needs rejoice;  
The nightingale grow still and meek,  
Hearing the music of her voice;  
And when to me her speech is given,  
I deem myself not far from heaven.

---

It is not true that love is blind.  
The soul that loveth well can see  
Away into eternity;  
And if it looketh not behind,  
Nor heedeth much the things that are,  
'Tis but because it sees so far;  
Love is not blind, love is not blind.

VII.

**LOVE OFFERED.**

---

I dare not say I am wholly thine,  
Though so intense my love;  
I may not give what is not mine,  
And e'en a Fool hath a soul divine,  
Marked with a seal and a holy sign  
As belonging to God above.

But all I have, unto thee I bring,  
To keep, or to cast away;  
A song, as sweet as a Fool can sing;  
Love, that is pure as a white dove's wing;  
Humble, indeed, is the offering  
I have laid at thy feet to-day.

VIII.

**MY LADY AND I.**

---

My Lady and I went walking one day,  
In the early Autumn, when days grow cool;  
My Lady was beautiful, bright and gay;  
And I—well, I was a Fool.

As we stood on a cliff, with the sea below,  
There were fleecy clouds in the sky above;  
And I—I was only a Fool, you know,—  
I tried to tell her my love.

I remember, well, that the skies were blue,  
Yet the wind from the North came somewhat cool,  
As my Lady laughed. What else could she do,  
' Since I was only a Fool?

And I know, had she acted otherwise,  
Left the holy height upon which she was born,  
And come down to me,—in sudden surprise  
My love would have turned to scorn.

Ah yes! I am sure it was better so;  
Much better for her that she laughed, unmoved;  
As for me, though still but a Fool, you know,  
I am wiser for having loved.



IX.

**LOVE SCORNEÐ.**

---

I cast my love at my Lady's feet;  
    With a look of scorn she passed it by,  
    And left it there, to wither and die,—  
The love I had found so strangely sweet.

But I looked at it, lying low in the dust,  
    And thought of the joy it had brought to me;  
    Then hid it away, where none might see,  
And bade it live on, as true love must.

Deep hid in my heart from each curious eye,  
    Like a quiet monk of the olden days,  
    Forever it chanteth my Lady's praise  
Though she heedeth not if it live or die.

X.

IN THE NIGHT.

---

Why was I born? Did God look on the earth,  
See its great pain, and its endless woe:  
Then, to relieve mankind with mirth,  
Make me a Fool from the day of my birth?  
Should I murmur if that were so?

Is it worth the trouble of life, the pain,  
Constant and keen, just to bring a smile  
Into tear-worn eyes? Has my life been vain?  
Often I ask, now it's on the wane,  
Has it really been quite worth while?

Yea. God is wise, and He placed me here,  
E'en as I am, a Fool, a jest.  
And a thorough Fool I have been! 'Tis clear  
No piece of folly was shirked! What fear  
Need I feel, having done my best?

XI.

DAWN.

---

It will not last alway. A change will come;  
This weary soul will fall asleep one night,  
These stamm'ring lips will someshort while be dumb,  
Then wake to utter truth; a holy light  
Will brighten these dull, foolish eyes of mine,  
And I shall stand erect, a soul divine.

A soul divine! A feeble Fool no more,  
But one of God's own angels. Ah, that day  
Is long in coming; distant is the shore  
I long so much to reach, and hard the way  
I needs must travel; yet I will not fear;  
A Fool, I know but this, that God is near.

## XII.

### SENT FORTH ON ERRAND HIGH.

---

When first the King's word came to me, that I  
Should cross the sea, bearing to foreign lands  
Tokens of his good will, and high esteem—  
When first, I say, his message came to me,  
I marvelled somewhat that the King should jest  
With such solemnity. But none the less,  
I laid aside my cap and bells, and all  
The livery of foolishness; washed out  
The ghastly, painted smile that mocked my thoughts,  
Then went and bowed myself before the King.

"Sire, I am prepared to go," I said,  
"Wherever thou shalt bid." He, kindly eyed,  
Laid his white hand upon my hair, and spake  
"Because I see that love has touched thine heart,  
And because whoso loveth is no fool,  
Therefore I charge thee, lay aside thy jests;  
And gravely, as becomes a man who wears  
This token of his sovereign's love and trust,  
Carry my greetings where I may not go."

With that, he placed upon my trembling hand  
A signet ring. And then,—I know not what  
Followed, except that faces crowded round,  
And many grasped my hand, and wished me well.  
But, all the time, I only saw one face,  
Radiantly fair, and only heard one voice,  
As low my Lady murmured: "Have no fear,  
But trust thyself as others trust in thee."

XIII.  
**AT SEA.**

---

Fall fast, O rain.  
Lift up your crests, ye seas.  
And wail, O stormy wind,  
Across the strand.  
I, also, am in pain,  
Restless and ill at ease,  
Because I leave behind  
My native land.

Be still, wild heart.  
Why shouldst thou thus complain  
Of what is done for thee  
By those who rule?  
Hard it is, now, to part;  
Sweet to return again,  
Knowing that thou shalt be  
No more a Fool.

I will not fear.  
Since 'tis my Lady's will,  
Since 'tis my King's behest  
That I should leave  
All that I hold most dear,  
Hard though the task be, still,  
Knowing that they know best,  
I will not grieve.

XIV.

A FOOL'S BENEDICTION.

---

That day you held my life in your hand,  
To make, or mar, as pleased you best,  
And laughed to find it at your command,  
Did you think my love a jest?

Nay, for your life was not unkind;  
You took my soul, such a senseless clod,  
You touched the eyes, before so blind,  
And showed me the living God.

You found me deaf, so sang a song  
That thrilled my being until I heard;  
You saved the soul, that was going wrong  
For want of a warning word.

So when I hear the thing that's true,  
And see the thing that's pure and fair,  
I praise you, well as a Fool can do,  
And loud as a Fool may dare.

XV.

AT EVENTIDE.

---

My heart cries out for thee at eventide,  
When the glad sunlight fadeth from the west ;  
And all my soul is filled with strange unrest ;  
I long for thee, and care for naught beside,  
At eventide.

Alone I look upon the evening star ;  
'T was thou first taught me all its perfect grace.  
And now,—I stand alone in this strange place,  
Where thou hast never been. Thou art so far,  
Mine evening star.

Thou art mine evening star ; so pure, so bright,  
So altogether holy. My poor love  
Scarce toucheth thee, thou art so far above ;  
Yet is my soul all radiant with thy light,  
So pure, so bright.

XVI.

**LOVE IN EXILE.**

---

I ask not praise; and yet, if you should say  
My life, so far, had not been all in vain,  
I fancy I could go upon my way  
Toward the grave, nor feel the bitter pain

That now eats out my heart. I ask not love;  
Yet if, just once, you kissed my aching brow  
And said: "Dear heart!" while stars shone out above,  
Why, I might be less sorrowful than now.

Alone I walk, on barren, wind-swept hills,  
Where neither love nor praise my soul can know.  
Well, I must be content with what God wills,  
Nor leave the path whereon He bade me go.



XVII.

**LAMENTATION.**

Only one year has passed, a long, sad year,  
Since I, from foreign lands, came to my home;  
Scarce knowing why I came, save that I yearned  
To see again my Lady's perfect grace,  
To hear, once more, her voice, so dearly loved—  
Ah, woe is me, how silent is the tomb!  
Somewhat I longed, beside, to see the King;  
Somewhat I hoped, perhaps, to win his praise,  
Seeing I brought him that which he had sought,  
The friendship of great kings beyond the sea.  
Too clearly now his praises come to me,  
Like bridal bells that mock a funeral train.

All unannounced I came into the Court.  
No warder stood without the castle gate,  
No courtiers, gaily dressed, thronged through the halls,  
But all was echoing emptiness and woe.  
Sudden the deep-toned chapel bell rang out,  
And swiftly to the chapel did I go,  
Fearful of some strange grief. Before the door  
Kneeled a vast crowd; lords, ladies, serving men  
And maidens, all in tears and misery.  
Through them I pushed my way. What lay beyond?  
A nameless terror seized upon my soul.  
Fast to the front I strode, and lo! the King,  
The Queen, most gracious, and a hundred knights,  
With bowed heads, kneeled upon the stony floor,  
Weeping and praying. And, in front of them,  
O fairest face! O sinless soul! I saw  
An open coffin, and within it lay,  
So calm, so still, like to a carven stone,  
My Lady. Oh, so very calm and still,  
Even the cry of agony which rose  
Straight from my wounded heart, aroused her not.

Why did they silence me, and lead me thence?  
Never my soul cried out to her in vain.  
She did not hear me, that first time I cried.  
A little patience, and she would have heard;  
A little patience, and she would have smiled,  
And said the word that it was best to say.

To-day the grass is green above her grave;  
To-day wild roses, sweetest violets,  
With birds that gaily sing, make glad the vale  
Wherein she sleeps. But not at all my grief  
Lessens or fades.

Wonder ye why I weep?

Because my Lady's gentle voice is hushed,  
Because her so fair face is seen no more,  
The world to me is all a dreary waste.  
O Lady of my love! My guiding star!  
The one light of my life! Since thou art gone,  
Darkness has overtaken all the earth,  
And in the gloom my spirit faints and falls.

XVIII.

LOVE RECOMPENSED.

---

"If it should chance that he should mourn for me  
Longer than others; or if, any way,  
He showeth that he loveth, give to him  
This message Death hath made me bold to speak:  
*Dear, I have loved thee long. And now—I go  
Whither no mortal knows. Yet do not grieve.  
I have but gone before a little way.  
Beyond the barriers of flesh and sense,  
My doubts, thy follies, passed and overcome,  
We two shall surely meet, and surely know  
The perfect bliss that comes of perfect love.*"

Such words my Lady spake unto the Queen  
Upon the very day her soul took flight.  
Such words the Queen has spoken unto me  
To-night, beneath the stars; after a year  
Of doubt, of desolation and despair,  
Had proved me true, deserving of her trust.  
Yea here, upon the cypress-circled lawn  
Where first my Lady came to me, I heard  
The last words she had uttered upon earth.

I, who had hoped for naught, received so much!  
The promise of her love! O stars that shine;  
O fleecy clouds fast floating o'er the sky;  
O moaning trees, that lift high arms to heaven;  
O steadfast hills, unmoved witnesses  
Of such great happiness; witness this too:  
That here and now my spirit doth resolve  
To prove full worthy of my Lady's love!

THE END.



# Other Verses.



## MORNING.

---

'T is dawn ; the voices of the night are stilled,  
The voices of the day have not yet come.  
Above, the glory of the stars is dimmed,  
A soft gray light is over land and sea.  
But, even as I look, the sun's flame burns  
The East to sudden red ; swift, golden rays  
Shoot upward, bright precursors of the orb  
That follows fast ; then, from one small brown bird,  
Who sits and sways upon the pine tree's top,  
There falls a flood of song ; so sweet, so clear,  
It seems as if an angel leaned from heaven  
And touched his harp. Thus sweetly doth he sing,  
Till all his mates are wakened and sing too,  
Wrapping the earth in boundless melody.  
So is the new day born, midst hymns of praise,  
And the sweet incense of most perfect sound.

Swiftly the scene has changed ; the sea that lay  
In misty slumber one short moment since,  
Now gleams and glistens in the sun's glad light.  
And look, a white sail dances o'er the waves,  
Bearing brave fishers, who have toiled since eve,  
To home and rest. The hills, that looked before  
Like darker clouds the sun would soon disperse,  
Now show their outlines sharp against the sky ;  
Only in sheltered valleys, here and there,  
The soft white mist lingers a little while.  
Too soon the birds grow still, and common sounds,  
The crow of cocks, the hum of busy bees,  
Perchance the gentle lowing of the cows  
Calling the sleepy milkers from their beds,  
Proclaim the world awake. Night hath flown far  
Beyond the seas, and every living thing  
Gives welcome to the glory of the day.

## EVENING.

---

The earth is hushed, for it is eventide.  
As yet there are no stars, nor hath the moon,  
Endymion's one love, yet deigned to show  
Celestial face unto the waiting world.  
There are no sounds, save one weird night-bird's call,  
And one lone cricket's chirp; all else is still.  
Even the grasses cease their rustling sigh,  
And bow their heads as if they thought of God.

But lo! the South breathes gently, and her breath,  
Sweet with the scent of flowers, bears with it  
Faint echoes of a distant vespèr bell.  
The spell is o'er. From out the deepening blue  
One silver star shines forth; then, far away,  
The other side of heaven's wide domain,  
Rises the moon. The grasses lift their heads  
To whisper: "She hath come." Flowers that sleep  
Sway to and fro, half waking from their dreams,  
And offer up sweet incense to their Queen.  
A thousand trivial sounds now greet the ear;  
Soft, fitful breezes stir the cool, green leaves;  
The mystery of night is o'er the earth.

## NOVEMBER, 1892.

---

Dark is the earth; but all the western sky  
Is bright with sunset tints, and in the east  
The full orb'd moon is rising; while between  
The two horizons, some few silver stars  
Appear and disappear amid the blue.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dark is the earth; and oh! so dark the way  
Wherein I walk! But through the gloom my soul  
Looks up to where the lights of heaven shine;  
The light of Love, a gleam of reddened gold;  
The light of Truth, calm as the placid moon;  
And 'twixt the two, the scattered, changeful lights  
Of great souls gone from earth to shine above,  
And come and go about the throne of God.



## A PROTEST.

---

"To-day will die to-morrow,  
Time stoops to no man's lure."

Swinburne.

"To-day will die to-morrow." So he says  
Who weaveth words all wondrously; yet I  
Can call to memory unnumbered days  
That through unnumbered ages shall not die.

And e'en he adds: "Time stoops to no man's lure."  
Too easily flows on the facile line;  
Here also, Bard, thy saying was not sure;  
Why, there are even flower-like songs of thine

That shall with subtle sweetness so beguile  
The ancient Mower, that his scythe must be  
Turned from them; some may live but little while;  
A few have blossomed for eternity.

With deathless yesterdays the world is filled;  
Their influence on every hand we find;  
Days whose vast meaning through the world hath  
thrilled  
Shaping the destiny of all mankind.

And many men have lured Time to halt,  
And stayed Oblivion; some, more daring yet,  
Defying Time with sudden, sharp assault,  
On heights of deathless fame their names have set.

Ah! thou wast weary when that song was sung;  
Weary of days and men, desires and dreams;  
Else had thy tuneful note more truly rung,  
And told of Life that is, not Death that seems,

## INSPIRATION.

---

The time has not yet come! I fain would sing  
A song should rouse men from their shameful rest,  
And set them marching; make the laggard spring  
Quick to his feet, seeking the thing that's best,  
Whate'er it be, stern Truth, or gracious Love.  
But till the hour shall come, no strength is mine;  
I wait a signal from the Power above,  
I wait an echo of the Voice divine.  
Until that echo sound, I can but wait,  
Nursing in silence all my love and hate;  
Love of the good, deep hate of every wrong,  
These shall increase until they rise to song;  
Then louder, clearer, than a trumpet-blast,  
My voice shall rouse the sleeping world at last.

## TO A FRIEND.

---

Across the land, across the sea,  
This letter swiftly speeds, dear friend;  
A white-winged witness unto thee  
Of love, that, through eternity,  
Shall never alter, never end.

Though for so short a time we met,  
Think not the meeting was in vain;  
I have no fear lest you forget—  
Our feet toward one goal are set,  
And we shall surely meet again.

Somewhat apart our lives must be;  
Thou fain wouldst know; I fain would love;  
I long to feel, whilst thou wouldst see,  
The deeply hid Divinity  
That thrills the world and makes it move.

By different ways we seek one end;  
Which way is best I cannot tell;  
But now, while still apart, dear friend,  
This letter unto thee I send,  
To let thee know I love thee well.

## SANTA CRUZ.

---

As oft, in days of chivalry, a knight  
Upon his shield would grave his Lady's name,  
And bear it ever with him in the fight,  
That, if his valor should achieve him fame,  
Where'er his praise was told, 'twould added be:  
"To such a maiden he avowed his love,  
As being worthy;" so I, loving thee,  
Fair Santa Cruz, with thy blue skies above,  
Thy flowing streams, and hill-encircled sea;  
Would fain so weave thy name into my song  
That they might never wholly parted be;  
But if my verses chanced to please the throng,  
No one could doubt that 'twas thy loveliness  
Lent unto them such grace as they possess.







